UI Librarian-SLIS Student Mentoring Program

The University of Iowa Libraries provides a mentoring program whereby students in the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) are paired with an academic librarian for a semester or longer.

For the Libraries, mentoring experiences provide the opportunity for staff to work with motivated students to enrich the experience of future librarians and to assist them in understanding the full spectrum of the work of an academic librarian. Participation in the program will count towards Category II (Service Outside the Libraries) work, as approved by the Libraries Administration Group.

For SLIS students, the experience provides the opportunity to put into practice the theoretical framework provided in the classroom, the opportunity to learn more about an aspect of academic research librarianship as a career option, regular contact with a library professional, and socialization into the profession.

The mentor/mentee experience is:
- Unpaid with no class credit.
- 15-20 hours over the course of one semester.
- Structured by the mentor and mentee, whereby regular contact is expected, but specifics of the experience and meeting schedule are set by the two individuals involved.
- Designed to increase the professional competency of the SLIS student and to serve as an enriching experience, acquainting him or her with other librarians in the department, their work, and academic librarianship in general.
- Understood by the student to carry expectations regarding punctuality, effort, communication.

Process:
- Karen Fischer, SLIS liaison, posts a call for librarians to participate several weeks before the start of the semester.
- Karen Fischer, SLIS liaison, posts a call to SLIS students (via the SLIS List) who would like to participate 4 weeks prior to the start of the semester (late July for Fall appointments, and mid-December for Spring appointments).
- Karen Fischer matches students with librarians a week before the semester begins.
- There is no guarantee that every interested student will have a librarian mentor.

Examples of mentoring experiences:
- Attend (and assist in, if desired) instructional classes with a Librarian.
- Assist in projects, if desired (e.g. help prepare for a class, create a LibGuide, repair a book).
- Discuss librarian’s career path and professional development activities, as well as student’s interests.
- Shadow librarians in their work (ex: attend a meeting with a faculty member, observe the cataloging of an item or the repair of a book, observe the selection process of books).
- Attend meetings with a librarian, such as departmental meetings, committee meetings, staff meetings, or meetings with vendors who visit.

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Descriptions of Units/Departments of Participating Mentors

- **Access Services** consists of several departments and areas, of which a mentee will be mentored by the Head of Access Services. The **Circulation department** handles all transactions related to the checking in and checking out of materials, including sending materials to campus offices and other campus libraries. The **Course Reserves department** handles all transactions related to placing materials, including streaming video, on reserve for a class. The **Bookstacks department** handles the shelving of returned and new books as well as maintenance of the collection. The **Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery department** handles requests for materials (PDFs of articles/book chapters as well as books) not owned or not available through the UI Libraries. The off-site storage facility (Libraries Annex) is managed under the Access Services umbrella. Access Services also works closely with the Learning Commons and Research and Library Instruction departments to provide an integrated service point.

- **Acquisitions & Electronic Resources Management** Acquisitions & ERM involves the process of selecting, ordering, and receiving materials and electronic resources for library. Procedures include interfacing and communication with publishers and vendors. Work activities that are performed in Acquisitions also includes claiming missing materials, analyzing vendor offers, reviewing licenses for electronic resources, working with the ILS and link resolver software, and resolving problems with electronic access to paid resources.

- **Cataloging/Metadata**
  - **Cataloging**: Students will be exposed to cataloging theory and methods in a research library. Mentees will learn and produce online catalog records using current mark-up language, cataloging standards, and Library of Congress guidelines. Special collections, foreign language, and multi-format cataloging will also be explored. As desired, students can attend a variety of relevant meetings.
  - **Metadata** involves analyzing digital collections to create access plans for a variety of archival and manuscript materials. Vocabulary is controlled through the use of several different thesauri. Other work involves the recycle and transformation of external metadata for Electronic Theses and Dissertation to fit the requirements of the University’s institutional repository and its online catalog. Various software programs and markup tools are employed to transform the encoding structure, content rules and character display of metadata sets. Collaborative meetings are held bi-weekly with representatives of other units involved in the selection, planning, and implementation of digital projects and the institutional repository.

- **Collection Management** involves the development and management of the library’s collections (print and electronic). Work involves identifying materials to purchase and projecting future needs for the collection, assessment of existing resources, and special projects such as de-selection, analyzing expenditures, and reviewing all subscription orders. It also includes interfacing and building relationships with faculty and students to identify research and curricular needs.

- **Conservation**, which is part of the Preservation department, is concerned about the physical repair of materials so that they can be used in the library, either by researchers, for reformatting projects, or for exhibits and presentations. Activities may include cleaning and mending paper, repairs to bindings, building custom enclosures, or chemically treating paper to prolong its life. Conservation staff work with librarians to help assess damage, decide on appropriate physical treatments and document the process.

- **Digital Preservation**: Digitization of collections of all types – books, letters, photos, maps, slides, tapes, films, records, and more – is managed by the Preservation & Conservation department. The Libraries’ digitization operation has recently been centralized and streamlined with the creation of two new
librarian positions, a Digital Processing Coordinator Librarian and a Digital Preservation Librarian. A mix of in-house and outsourced digitization and processing is closely integrated with Conservation review and treatment, and with metadata, public presentation, and long-term management of digital content. Staffs work closely with colleagues in Digital Research and Publishing, Cataloging-Metadata, Library IT, and with collection managers and curators. By taking a lifecycle approach to managing digital collections, the Preservation & Conservation department is leading the Libraries’ efforts to build the capacity and infrastructure needed to create high-quality digital collections, and to preserve and provide access to them for future generations.

- **Digital Research & Publishing** explores ways that academic libraries can best leverage digital collections, resources, and expertise to support faculty, student, and citizen scholars by: collaborating on interdisciplinary scholarship built upon digital collections, offering publishing services to support sustainable scholarly communication, engaging the community through participatory digital initiatives such as crowdsourcing, promoting widespread use and reuse of the University’s archives and digital repositories, and exploring innovative new technologies like digital mapping and linked data that support digital research and publishing.

- **Hardin Library for the Health Sciences** Librarians at Hardin provide services to academic health science programs and clinical departments within the hospital, in the form of classroom lectures, reference services, curriculum integrated instruction, hands-on training sessions, individual consultations, and delivery of online instructional materials. Students would be encouraged to observe or participate in any of these activities with guidance, and would be made aware of other opportunities that arise.

- **Learning Commons** The Learning Commons Coordinator coordinates and assesses projects, plans, and services in the Learning Commons and oversees any facility and technology issues relating to the Learning Commons. The coordinator acts as a liaison to academic partners across campus and works to ensure that the Learning Commons is tied to student engagement, retention and classroom outcomes and objectives.

- **Management** Mentoring with a library department manager will give you perspective on how a specific department interacts and works with other library departments, how work as a manager requires one to think strategically, and will expose you to issues related to supervising and coordinating the work of staff.

- **Research & Library Instruction, Main Library** All librarians in this department serve as liaisons to academic departments, and in some cases to larger constituent groups (for example, we have an Undergraduate Services Librarian). The primary activities of RLI Librarians are instruction, outreach, research help, and collection development.

- **Research & Instruction, Branch Library** (Business, Sciences, Engineering) The librarians in these libraries do all the same work as the Research & Library Instruction librarians, with the added perspective of being embedded into the departments to which they serve.

- **Special Collections & Archives** Students interested in mentoring with staff in Special Collections and University Archives will be exposed to many of the traditional functions of an academic library, but they’ll have the chance to see those functions applied within the specific context of special collections librarianship. Students may have the opportunity to see how rare materials and archives are used in the classroom; how they’re used in events, exhibits, and social media; how they’re used by researchers in the reading room, and by librarians answering reference queries. There may be opportunities to see how rare materials are acquired, how they’re processed and cataloged, and how they’re housed and preserved.